Knights Errant of the Distressed: Horace Walpole, Thomas Chatterton and Eighteenth-Century Charitable Culture

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Introduction

William Hazlitt's review of *Letters from the Hon. Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Esq. From the Year 1736 to 1770* published in the *Edinburgh Review* in December 1818 passes damning censure on Walpole's 'odd and quaint manner of thinking, and his utter poverty of feeling'.[1] Hazlitt deplores what he calls Walpole's 'scurvy treatment' of the designer Richard Bentley, who stood in relation to him as 'half patron and half friend', and worse conduct towards the painter employed at Strawberry Hill, Johann Heinrich Müntz, whom Walpole 'abused in a very ungenerous way for want of gratitude, and unmerciful extortion'. Hazlitt is convinced he knows the reason why the wealthy Walpole was such a poor benefactor: 'There is a sad want of feeling and dignity in all this; but the key to it is, that Walpole was a miser. He loved the arts after a fashion; but his avarice pinched his affections'. Hazlitt goes on to allude to the most notorious victim of Walpole's supposed neglect, Thomas Chatterton: 'His conduct to men of genius was a piece of insolence which Posterity is bound to resent!' We may compare 'Monody on the Death of Chatterton' (1796) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a charity school boy like Chatterton, whose speaker pleads for 'poor Misfortune's child' to be shielded from 'want', 'the bleak Freezings of neglect' and 'the sore wounds of Affliction's rod' (ll. 2,

[1] William Hazlitt, review of *Letters from the Hon. Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Esq. From the Year 1736 to 1770*, *Edinburgh Review* 31 (December 1818), 80-93.

10-11). By the Romantic period, it was commonly assumed that Chatterton's genius might have blossomed had Walpole not spurned his appeal for financial support; callousness prevailed, supposedly leading to Chatterton's suicide on 22 August 1770.

The purpose of this article is to survey for the first time the nature and range of Walpole's philanthropic activities in order to demonstrate that Hazlitt's characterization of him as a miser was unfair. Hazlitt was led astray by Walpole's personal view of what constituted charity and what did not. I will show how Walpole's assumptions and practices were rooted in eighteenth-century cultural norms yet were typically singular in their manifestation. It makes more sense, the article will contend, to understand Walpole's view of charitable good works as akin to that expressed by Pope in praise of private, hidden relief of the needy, embodied by the Man of Ross (John Kyrle of Ross in Herefordshire) and Ralph Allen (upon whom Henry Fielding's Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones* was based), who liked to 'do good by stealth, and blush to find it Fame'.[2] After a survey of Walpole's charitable acts, the article will seek to recover related themes within his 1764 Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*, first published with characteristic self-effacement under a pseudonym. Hazlitt wrote on the assumption that literary talent such as Chatterton's was a deserving cause. Walpole simply did not regard this as the case and so found himself at odds with later commentators who, like Hazlitt, regarded his reluctance to extend patronage as hard-hearted. In the acrimonious exchange of letters between Chatterton and Walpole in March and April 1769, re-examination of which makes up the middle portion of this article, it will be seen that the same divergence of opinion about the nature of financial obligation is the principal bone of contention.

[2] Kyrle features in Alexander Pope, *Epistle III. To Allen Lord Bathurst* ('Of the Use of Riches'), ll. 249-90 and receives a brief mention in *Epilogue to the Satires. Dialogue II* (1738), ll. 98-9; the quotation referring to Allen comes from *Epilogue to the Satires. Dialogue I* (1738), l. 136.

Chatterton performed the supplication required of eighteenth-century petitioners for charity but Walpole, after checking his credentials, did not consider him to be in genuine material distress.

It will be argued that Walpole was a generous man after his own lights. But the final portion of the essay will suggest that Chatterton's 'Excelente Balade of Charitie', a 'Rowley' poem traditionally interpreted as a cry of despair written shortly before his death, was a coded attack on Walpole's miserliness composed more in anger than in sorrow. Chatterton's view that artistic patronage was a form of charity was ahead of its time and arguably prevailed, evidenced by the establishment of the charitable Literary Fund in 1790 (the Royal Literary Fund from 1842) to save destitute authors from debtors' prison. This more impersonal mode of ministering relief could be said to avoid the dominance by a single powerful, often aristocratic individual associated with the traditional patronage system. The radical Hazlitt at the risk of contradicting himself seems to have resisted any form of handout that demeaned or humiliated the creative individual. In his essay 'On the Want of Money' (1827) he wrote 'I scarce know which I dislike the most – the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that which extends its piecemeal, formal charity towards it in decline. I hate your Literary Funds and Funds for Decayed Artists – they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence'.[3]

The article will also aim to generate some reflections on the significance and critical possibilities entailed in reading literary texts alongside charitable principles and practices. Literary and philanthropy studies (the current preferred critical term, although

[3] Hazlitt, 'On the Want of Money', in *Selected Writings* (ed. Ronald Blythe (London: Penguin, 1970), 455-6.

in the eighteenth century charity could be distinguished from the broader category of the love of mankind) have seldom been placed in dialogue. One is chiefly concerned with modes of representation, the other with modes of action (who gives and how people might be encouraged to give).[4] But there are emerging scholarly efforts to connect the two under the rubric of empathetic reading, or what we might call the sequential transition from the scene of reading to affect to action.[5] Underlying Walpole's Gothic fiction and Chatterton's medievalist ballad, as with most literature of the period, is a shared belief that literature, by conjuring emotion, shapes behavior. Literary form and patterning are central to this process. The novel form of *Otranto* with its dialogic structure is attuned to expose differences between proclaimed principles and performed practices – the rift between 'true' and 'cold' charity described by Raymond Williams, which scores through this topic.[6] Chatterton's 'Balade' as a more declamatory lyrical poem is better suited to vocalizing an act of supplication. One is defensive and recessive, as Walpole was, the other demonstratively registers the sense of entitlement held by Chatterton. Both are concerned with matters that go to the quick of morality: nothing less than efforts to ameliorate, if not relieve outright, the lot of humanity.

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[4] See the work of René Bekkers, *passim*. Peter Singer and the effective altruism movement consider representation insofar as it maximizes practical good: see *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism is Changing Ideas About Living Ethically* (London: Yale University Press, 2015).

[5] See the work of Derek Matravers, *Fiction and Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Kathleen Stock, *Only Imagine: Fiction, Interpretation and Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Literary scholars of the eighteenth century tend to focus on representations of charity in terms of gender, class and domesticity: see Donna Landry, 'Picturing Benevolence against the Commercial Cry, 1750-98: or, Sarah Fielding and the Secret Causes of Romanticism', in Jacqueline M. Labbe (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 150-71 and Lisa Zunshine, 'Introduction', *Philanthropy and Fiction, 1698-1818*, Levene et al (eds), *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 5.vii-xx, whose work mine admiringly follows.

[6] See entry for charity in *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1983), 54-5, where Williams notes the opposed senses of 'love' and the 'odium which has gathered around charity […] from feelings of wounded respect and dignity' (55).

Horace Walpole, Philanthropist

As a son of Sir Robert Walpole, Horace Walpole was a wealthy man. During his father's lifetime Walpole held the lucrative sinecures of Usher of the Exchequer, Comptroller of the Pipe and Clerk of the Estreates which entailed no duties yet brought an income of never less than £3000 per annum and often considerably more; after Walpole senior's death in 1745, Horace inherited a sizeable cash sum, the additional office of Collectorship of Customs and the lease of the family townhouse in fashionable Arlington Street, St James's.[7] From 1749, Walpole was also freeholder of Strawberry Hill in Twickenham where he would have paid the poor rate (recorded by the antiquarian topographer Edward Ironside as 2s. 6d. in 1787) and been familiar with the parish's two charity schools erected in 1740, one for 30 boys and one for 20 girls, and the parish's six alms-houses. A local tradition was for the vicar of St Mary's church (where Pope was buried in 1744) to throw £1 worth of penny loaves from the tower for poor children to catch in the churchyard below, before they were regaled with ale inside the church. By Ironside's time this custom took the more sober form of a distribution of cash doles.[8]

As fine studies by Donna Andrew, Sarah Lloyd, Hugh Cunningham, Joanna Innes and others have shown, in the eighteenth century charitable practices and the parish system of poor relief – the 'old poor law' before its reform in 1834 – underwent dramatic changes as a result of population growth, war, industrialization, urbanization and, in the

[7] See Paul Langford, 'Walpole, Horatio [Horace]', fourth earl of Orford (1717-1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://0-doi-org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/28592 (accessed 10th November 2018).

[8] See Edward Ironside's *The History and Antiquities of Twickenham: being the first part of Parochial Collections for the County of Middlesex; begun in 1780* (London: John Nichols, 1787), 2, 8-9, 71, 72, 115-17.

latter decades of the century, severe food shortages.[9] Numerous schemes to combat vagrancy, begging and the social evils of prostitution and infanticide were promulgated. By mid-century, associational charities had brought the innovations of the joint-stock company into the eleemosynary sphere, such as the Foundling Hospital for the care of abandoned children established in 1739; the Lock Hospital for the treatment of venereal disease established in 1746; the Marine Society for training poor boys for sea service established in 1756; and the Magdalen charity for the rehabilitation of penitent prostitutes established in 1758. Andrew has shown that as posthumous bequests fell from favor, donors increasingly sought public recognition for their bounty during their lifetimes. Associational charities such as the Foundling, which boasted England's first art gallery with canvases by Hogarth, Highmore and Hayman and annual fundraising concerts conducted by Handel, rapidly evolved into places of fashionable resort and the public performance of virtue.

Walpole was wary of such displays, as his visit to the Magdalen charity in 1760 discussed below indicates. More to his taste, inveterate correspondent as he was, were the private philanthropic networks that coalesced around *causes-célèbres,* galvanized by figures such as Hannah More and Elizabeth Montagu.[10] Walpole anonymously contributed five guineas to the campaign led by John Thornton and John Wesley to relieve French prisoners-of-war held in England during the bitter winter of 1759-60 (midway through the Seven Years' War), which raised £4000 (approximately £300,000

[9] Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Sarah Lloyd, *Charity and Poverty in England, ca. 1680-1820: Wild and Visionary Schemes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy And Reform from the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998).

[10] Patricia Comitini notes the prominent role played in such activities by women and dissenters; see *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing, 1790-1810* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

today) for warm coats, shirts, breeches, stockings and shoes.[11] He also shared in the national pride that could be derived from such large-scale humanitarianism, asking 'must it not make the Romans blush in their Appian Way, who dragged their prisoners in triumph? We abound in great charities: the distress of war seems to heighten rather than diminish them'.[12] Theodore, King of Corsica (really the German mercenary Theodor Stephan Freiherr von Neuhoff), lived off the charity of Walpole, who wrote about Theodore's plight in a special edition of *The World*, and others until he died penniless in London in 1756. Walpole paid for Theodore's memorial and composed its epitaphic quintrain that can still be seen today in the churchyard of St Anne's, Soho.[13]

In 1783, Mary Hamilton, Governess to the Royal Family, drew Walpole's attention to the case of Louisa, a mentally ill German woman who had been found living rough beneath a haystack outside Bristol. For a time it was supposed that she was the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I.[14] Even while he confessed the curiosity and interest of the case, which resembled the plot of a romance, Walpole's response was tellingly focused on material exigencies: he offered to trace Louisa's relatives in Germany through his ambassadorial connections and offered to pay for medical treatment. Walpole may have been sympathetic to mental illness given that his nephew, Lord Orford, was certified insane in 1773. This may also have led him to bequeath £3500

[11] See his letter to Grosvenor Bedford in Walpole, *Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis *et al*, 48 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), 40.453. The fundraising effort is recounted in *Proceedings of the Committee Appointed to Manage the Contributions Begun at London Dec. XVIII MDCCLVIIII for Cloathing French Prisoners of War* (London: for the Committee, 1760), i-xiii. For background and analysis of the episode, see Erica Charters, 'The Administration of War and French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1756–1763' in Charters, Eve Rosenhaft, and Hannah Smith (eds.), *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618–1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 87-99.

[12] Walpole, *Correspondence*, 21.367-8.

[13] R.W. Ketton-Cremer, *Horace Walpole: a Biography* (London: Faber, 1940), 151.

[14] Louisa became a minor literary sensation. Her story was related in *The Affecting History of Louisa, the Wandering Maniac, or, "Lady of the Hay-Stack"* (London: A. Neil, 1803) and Ann Yearsley's poem 'Clifton Hill' (composed 1785). Hannah More and her circle supported Louisa for many years, but she died 1801 in Guy's Hospital in London; see *Gentleman's Magazine* 71.1 (1801), 280-1.

in trust to Elizabeth Hunter and Rachel Davidson Daye, sisters who were insane, in his will.[15] In response to Hamilton, Walpole displayed his characteristic blend of picaresque wit and practical shrewdness when, alluding to Cervantes, he wrote that 'if it ever is justifiable to good sense to act romantically, it is by being the knights errant of the distressed. Louisa shall be my Dulcinea, Madam: and you shall be the Duchess who countenances me'.[16] This reconciliation of material relief and *ad hoc* charity that risked straying into the Quixotic evidently did not come easily to Walpole and only his perception of genuine necessity seems to have coaxed him into action.

Besides the semi-concealment Walpole found within networks of corresponding philanthropists, in the privacy of home he scanned the personal letters of appeal that were a staple feature of eighteenth-century newspapers. Andrew has written in detail on the typical dynamic between the petitioning supplicant and the potential benefactor that evolved within this sub-sector of periodical culture, noting that hired amanuenses were sometimes used and that donors could expect their bona fides to be checked.[17] A typical example that corroborates Andrew's analysis is Walpole's response to two letters of appeal which he seems to have cut out of a newspaper and transmitted to his man of business, Grosvenor Bedford. On 24 September 1762, Walpole wrote to Bedford if he would 'be so good as to inquire if the persons mentioned in these advertisements are really objects of charity, and if they are, I will beg you to leave a guinea for each, and put

[15] *Correspondence*, 30.358-9. The will also bequeaths £300 in trust to one Mary Newton, *alias* Farren of Chelsea, as having been maintained by Walpole 'from her infancy'; this legacy was revoked in a codicil after her death in December 1796. Nothing further is known of this woman; see *Correspondence* 30.360.

[16] Walpole, *Correspondence*, 31.207-9. The reference is to Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, II, chap. 30.

[17] Andrew, "To the charitable and humane": appeals for assistance in the eighteenth-century London press', in Cunningham and Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy And Reform*, 87-107.

it to my account'.[18] W.S. Lewis, the editor of Walpole's correspondence, speculates that one of the advertisements may have been published in the *Daily Advertiser* three days earlier on behalf of

> a poor creature now lying in St George's hospital, having lost all she was possessed of in the world by the late fire in Pulteney Street; and who to avoid perishing in the flames, threw herself together with a little boy out of a two pair of stairs window. […] She has not a rag of clothes to put on, nor either money or relations to assist her, but is a woman of an unexceptionable character, as the people of this house can testify.[19]

On 25 July 1764, the *Daily Advertiser* carried appeals from a 'poor destitute widow, with three children […] all perishing from want of necessities' and 'a poor tradesman, eighty-seven years of age, that is […] plunged into prison for a small debt, and in great distress'. On 30 July, Walpole sent Bedford three 'advertisements' with instructions to 'inquire after' them and 'if their cases are really compassionate, to give half a guinea for me to each […] but don't mention me'.[20] Walpole also used Bedford as his conduit for the anonymous relief of sick prisoners housed in the various jails around London.[21] In short, he was doing 'good by stealth' and stipulated that credentials were checked before money changed hands. As shall be seen, this was of a piece with his response to Chatterton's appeal for preferment when it reached him in March 1769.

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[18] Walpole, *Correspondence*, 40.270.

[19] Ibid, 40.270n.

[20] Walpole, *Correspondence*, 40.344-5. By way of comparison, Lord Townshend's account book for 1766-72 kept by his agent, Sir Robert Lees, records *ad hoc* payments of between one and five pence to individuals in similar circumstances; see Lewis Walpole Library MSS vol. 26.

[21] Walpole sent two guineas to sick prisoners in the County Jail, Southwark and one guinea to prisoners in the Marshalsea on 29 February 1764, and one guinea to prisoners in the Fleet Prison on 30 July 1764; see Walpole, *Correspondence*, 40. 308, 345.

Where Walpole differed from eighteenth-century norms of genteel benefaction was in his unease, bordering on active distaste, with the public performance of generosity that was expected on the social stage provided by the associational charities. This is manifest in his account of a visit to the newly established Magdalen charity on 27 January 1760 when he formed part of the entourage of Prince Edward. Francis Seymour-Conway, Earl of Hertford and Walpole's cousin, was the Magdalen's Founder President. Walpole's letter (incidentally the sole surviving description of the chapel at the Magdalen's original site at Prescot Street, near the Tower of London) to his confidant George Montagu draws attention to the occasion's pomposity, casting the penitent prostitutes (to whom he is revealingly kindly) as nuns. The charitable institution becomes a convent and the ceremony itself a popish spectacle laced with hypocritical outward shows of piety and Gothic sensory excess:

> This new convent is behind Goodman's Fields, and I assure you would content any Catholic alive. We were received by – oh! first, a vast mob, for princes are not so common at that end of town as at this. Lord Hertford at the head of the Governors with their white staves met us at the door, and led the Prince directly into the chapel, where before the altar was an armchair for him, with a blue damask cushion, a prie-dieu, and a footstall of black cloth with gold nails. We sat on forms near him. There were Lord and Lady Dartmouth, in the odour of devotion, and many City ladies. The chapel is small and low, but neat, hung with Gothic paper and tablets of benefactions. At the west end were inclosed the sisterhood, above an hundred and thirty, all in greyish brown stuffs, broad handkerchiefs, and flat straw hats with a blue ribband, pulled quite over their

> faces. As soon as we entered the chapel, the organ played, and the Magdalens sung a hymn in parts; you cannot imagine how well. The chapel was dressed with orange and myrtle, and there wanted nothing but a little incense, to drive away the devil – or to invite him.[22]

The preacher was the 'macaroni parson' William Dodd, whose sermon was on *Luke* 19.10, 'for the son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost' and addressed, with the aid of lively gestures, Walpole noted, to the fallen women directly.[23] Dodd invoked lurid tropes of pursuit and seduction familiar from amatory fiction as he described women 'lost to Virtue [...] treading, with careless terror, on the alarming precipice of utter ruin, and speedy *death*', some of whom had fallen victim to 'the complicated arts of seducers' and 'the treachery of perfidious friends'.[24] Both language and scenario are reminiscent of the plight of Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto*, the subject of Walpole's dedicatory sonnet to Lady Mary Coke added to the 1765 second edition:

> The gentle maid, whose hapless tale
> These melancholy pages speak;
> Say, gracious lady, shall she fail

[22] Walpole, *Correspondence*, 9.273. Compare Walpole's letter to Sir Horace Mann (3 February): 'I was there t'other night and fancied myself in a convent'; 21.367-8.The Magdalen relocated from Goodman's Fields to St George's Fields, Southwark, in new buildings designed by Joel Johnson. See Compston and S.B.P. Pearce, *An Ideal in the Working: The Story of the Magdalen Hospital 1758 to 1958* (London: H.B. Skinner, 1958), 28.

[23] The sermon was published on 31 January 1760 as *A Sermon, Preached at the Magdalen-House, before His Royal Highness Prince Edward* and was reproduced in Dodd's *Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Magdalen Charity* (London: W. Faden, 1763), 10 ff. On Dodd's tenure at the Magdalen, see Compston and Pearce, *Magdalen Hospital*, 113-38.

[24] Dodd, *Account*, 89, 94.

To draw the tear adown thy cheek?[25]

Walpole observed that Dodd's pulpit *tour de force* reduced Lady Hertford and Fanny Pelham to tears, 'till I believe the City dames took them both for Jane Shores', a reference to Edward IV's mistress. This levelling of the lower-class magdalens and the high-born women tearfully consuming their predicament has the effect of reducing distinctions between rich and poor, benefactor and supplicant, sinless and sinner; Walpole in effect makes the blunt point that upper-class women have been whores too. Judge not lest ye be judged.[26]

Indeed, there is great scope for reading Walpole's skepticism towards charity whose chief purpose is self-aggrandizing display into the plot of *Otranto*. It is set in medieval Italy with the Catholic doctrine of good works forming an intrinsic part of the novel's neo-Gothic fabric and, I suggest, its supernatural denouement. As is well known, the first edition of Walpole's tale was published anonymously on Christmas Eve 1764 and purported to be a translation by 'William Marshall, Gent.' of the work of 'Onuphrio Muralto' (a partial translation of Walpole's name into Italian) a 'Canon of the Church of St Nicholas at Otranto', printed in black letter and discovered in the household of a Catholic family in the north of England. The 'editor' singles out for criticism the moral weakness of the plot, which rests on the doctrine that 'anathema may be diverted by devotion to saint Nicholas'; an instance, the editor avers, where 'the interest of the monk plainly gets the better of the judgement of the author' (7). This refers to the novel's backstory in which Manfred's grandfather, Ricardo, who by murdering Alfonso the Good

[25] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, ed. E.J. Clery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

[26] On differing perceptions of the Magdalen charity, see Jennie Batchelor, "Industry in Distress": Reconfiguring Femininity and Labor in the Magdalen House', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 28.1 (Winter 2004), 1-20.

usurped the principality of Otranto, postponed divine retribution for two generations in exchange for endowing a church and two convents dedicated to St Nicholas, Otranto's patron saint. This device rests in turn on Protestant skepticism, shared by Walpole, towards the supposed Catholic insistence that good works even if unaccompanied by good faith acted in surety upon God.

Throughout the novel, numerous instances occur of false charity performed by Manfred and true, because selfless, charity enacted by more admirable characters. Manfred's first act is to betray his fiduciary duty towards Isabella who has been entrusted to his care as a ward, having been 'delivered by her guardians' into his hands after her father, Frederic of Vicenza, was captured by Saracens in the Holy Land (15). Like a villainous governor of the Magdalen charity, he abuses the victim he is entrusted to protect when he tries to seduce Isabella after his son, Conrad, is crushed by the gigantic casque of Alonso, threatening to extinguish his bloodline. When Frederic and his cavalcade arrive at the castle in disguise, Manfred offers them false hospitality in the hope of concealing the fact that Isabella has fled. In addition, Father Jerome (really the Count of Falconara) explicitly and repeatedly vilipends Manfred for uncharitable behavior; when Manfred threatens to violate the sanctuary of St Nicholas in order to seize Isabella who has fled there, Jerome demands he 'pray to heaven to pardon that uncharitableness […] she is where orphans and virgins are safest from the snares and wiles of this world; and nothing but a parent's authority shall take her hence' (46-7).

If Manfred and his grandfather's self-serving gestures represent the hollow simulacrum of charity Walpole despises, elsewhere in the story characters find that genuinely altruism leads to advancement and reward; *Otranto* may in this sense be

described as a romance of charity. The name of Hippolita, Manfred's long-suffering wife, is a byword in Otranto for pious benefaction. When Theodore (Falconara's son and unknown to him Otranto's true heir) calls up to Matilda (Manfred and Hippolita's daughter) in the guise of a peasant, she replies from her window 'if poverty afflicts thee, let me know it; I will mention thee to the princess, whose beneficent soul ever melts for the distressed; and she will relieve thee' (43). Manfred tries to ingratiate himself with Jerome knowing that the friar 'was employed by Hippolita in her charities' (47), and Jerome refers to Hippolita as 'a mother to our house' (63), for she has endowed an 'adjacent hospital for the reception of pilgrims' (66). The emphasis on practical relief of the needy in these references is noteworthy.

As the plot nears its crisis, we learn that while in the Holy Land Frederic had a dream in which St Nicholas appeared to him, leading him to discover his daughter's danger and return to Otranto to rescue her. This information is unearthed when St Nicholas guides Frederic to a copse where a hermit lies in his death throes. Frederic relieves the holy man who declares himself 'bounden to your charity' (81). Frederic's reward is to be told the whereabouts nearby of Alfonso the Good's gigantic sword, whose blade bears an inscription alerting Frederic. After this convoluted device the hermit helps Frederic a second time by appearing to him in a moment of weakness as a cowled skeleton; terrified into a renewed sense of mission, he escapes from Manfred's machinations.

In her introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of *Otranto*, Emma Clery considers the reason for St Nicholas's prominence in the novel 'uncertain' (117). But on examination of the iconography of St Nicholas of Myra and Bari (located along the coast

from the real-life Otranto, as Walpole would have known), we see that the saint is the logical arbiter of *Otranto*'s plot and winnower of true charity from false. St Nicholas' moniker in Greek is *Nikolaos ho Thaumaturgos*, 'Nicholas the wonder-worker', and he is traditionally associated with gift-giving. He is also the patron saint of pawnbrokers, his attributes being three golden balls which Nicholas secretly placed in an impoverished nobleman's house to provide a dowry for his three daughters, saving them from prostitution. In *Otranto*'s final pages, a vision of Alonso appears amid the ruins of the castle and 'the form of saint Nicholas was seen […] receiving Alonso's shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory' (113). Having witnessed the heavenly assumption of the 'good' votary, Manfred abdicates and he and Hippolita 'each took on them the habit of religion in neighbouring convents' (115). Like the magdalens minus the outward display of virtue confected by their public setting, Manfred's soul is laundered through private penitence.

Chatterton: Charity Case?

Among the many readers of *Otranto* we know was Thomas Chatterton, who read the novel during his spell as an apprentice in the office of the Bristol attorney John Lambert. Whilst there, Chatterton began composing, or fabricating, the corpus of sham-medieval manuscripts known as the Rowley papers, named for the fictitious fifteenth-century secular priest Thomas Rowley upon whom they centered. Chatterton's ingenious forgeries, which he claimed to have discovered in the muniment chest of the church of St Mary Redcliffe where his father was sexton, are well known, but a little regarded feature of the Rowley papers is their fixation on the philanthropic support provided to Rowley by

his patron, the real-life Bristol merchant and benefactor of the city William Canynges (1399-1474). Charity loomed large in Chatterton's short life: a charity schoolboy, until 1767 he attended Colston's School in Bristol, endowed in 1710 by the merchant and slave-trader Edward Colston; the motto of the school (which still exists) consists of Christ's parting words in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), 'go thou and do likewise'. As an aspiring writer precociously possessed of a sense of his own genius, it made sense for Chatterton to place a prominent poet-patron relationship at the heart of his imaginative edifice in order to coax a real-life patron forward. To understand Chatterton's anger at Walpole's refusal to act as his Maecenas (as Walpole later put it), it is important to recognize the emphasis placed within Rowley's medieval universe on artistic patronage considered as a charitable duty incumbent on the rich. Evidently for Chatterton this was an obligation akin to and, in his own case, coterminous with relief of the poor.

It was disagreement over what was and was not comprehended under the cloak of charity that caused Chatterton's incandescent grudge against the master of Strawberry Hill, which, the concluding section argues, powered his bitterly ironic 'Excelente Balade of Charitie', often considered the finest of the Rowley poems. We have seen that Walpole was publicity-averse as a giver and uncomfortable with the possibility that donations might draw attention to himself or attract accusations of self-interest, the abuses of charity reprobated in *Otranto*. There is a striking contrast between this position and the Rowley poems' framing of patronage as not merely a form of charity but one worthy of public exaltation. Daniel Cook argues quite rightly that Walpole was 'caught in a slippage between the old system of patrician patronage and the rising middling sort who

idealistically offered charity to unfortunate artists among their numbers'.[27] But, unlike Chatterton, and unusually for the age, Walpole did not regard the 'old system' of patronage as charitable at all, hence Hazlitt's misplaced objections when he did not pursue this type of relief.

A glance at the Rowley texts dedicated to Canynges reveals the patron figure writ prominently: witness the *Brief Account of William Cannings from the Life of Thomas Rowlie Preeste*, composed in September 1768, or the hagiographic *Life of W: Canynge – by Rowlie*, composed between December 1768 and February 1769 and published posthumously in William Barrett's *History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol* (1789). The first of these has Rowley recount his service as 'Fader Confessour' to Canynges and his brother Robert. Whereas Robert was 'greedie of Gayne, and sparynge of Almes Deedes', 'Mastere William was mickle Courteous, and gave me manie Markes in my neede'.[28] Rowley's status as a secular priest is significant: as a mendicant he is not maintained by any religious institution and is dependent on alms for his living; as a priest, alms given to support his writerly vocation (such as Canynges gives him) can be construed as an act of charitable piety. It seems that Chatterton through his eidolon Rowley was conflating creative talent with spiritual desert, a picture he unfortunately complicated when he presented the Rowley papers as the work of another person.

On 15 February 1769, Chatterton wrote to the bookseller James Dodsley offering what he said was a copy of *Ælla: a Tragical Interlude, or Discoorseynge Tragedie, wrotenn bie Thomas Rowlie; Plaiedd before Mastre Canynge* and angling very strongly

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[27] Daniel Cook, *Thomas Chatterton and Neglected Genius, 1760-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 88.

[28] Thomas Chatterton, *Complete Works*, ed. Donald S. Taylor and Benjamin B. Hoover, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 1.51. The biographical note prefixed to 'The Excelente Balade of Charite' repeats the detail of the bequest of 100 marks.

for one guinea to procure the original manuscript; it is not thought that Dodsley replied to this or a brief earlier letter of 21 December 1768.[29] The following month, on 25 March 1769, Chatterton wrote to Walpole care of his bookseller William Bathoe, enclosing *The Ryse of Peyncteygne, yn Englande, wroten bie T. Rowleie. 1469 for Mastre Canynge*. This was a double hook given Walpole's known taste for medievalism and authorship seven years previously of *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762), where he argued for the value of pre-Reformation art. In his title, Chatterton again highlighted Canynges' role as Rowley's financier and added a note mentioning the existence of poetry by him, some of which 'would do honor to Pope', promising that 'the Person under whose Patronage they may appear to the World, will lay the Englishman, the Antiquary, and the Poet, under an eternal Obligation'.[30] Walpole sent an encouraging reply on 28 March and Chatterton followed up two days later enclosing 'The Warre', supposedly a twelfth-century poem composed by 'Abbate Johne', and what was probably *Elinore and Juga. Written three hundred Years ago by T. Rowley, a Secular Priest*, the only Rowley poem published in Chatterton's lifetime.[31] In his covering letter, which he later destroyed, Chatterton made the error of asking for preferment. Characteristically wary (one is reminded of the tone of notes to Bedford), Walpole forwarded the papers to Thomas Gray and William Mason who promptly – and accurately – judged them modern forgeries. In particular, they insisted that the word 'glumm' in the first line of 'The Warre' ('Of Warres glumm Pleasaunce doe I chaunte mie Laie') was a modern cant term; as we shall

[29] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.171-3 and 157.
[30] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.259.
[31] *Elinor and Juga* was published in *Town and Country Magazine* in May 1769. E.H.W. Meyerstein thinks this was the poem enclosed on 30 March based on Walpole's description of it as 'an absolute modern pastoral in dialogue, thinly sprinkled with old words'; *A Life of Thomas Chatterton* (London: Ingpen & Grant, 1930), p. 261. However, Taylor believes the poem was composed in May 1769; see Chatterton, *Works*, 2.955-6.

see this detail recurs in Chatterton's reaction. Walpole at the same time followed the practice of respondents to newspaper letters of appeal by commissioning his Bristol relation Lady Malpas to check Chatterton's credentials; she confirmed that Chatterton was an attorney's clerk bound to Lambert.[32]

Walpole's reply to Chatterton is no longer extant, but according to his later published defense of his conduct in the affair, *A Letter to the Editor of the Miscellanies of Thomas Chatterton* (1779), he wrote Chatterton 'a letter with as much kindness and tenderness, as if I had been his guardian' and 'urged to him that in duty and gratitude to his mother, who had straitened herself to breed him up to a profession, he ought to labour in it, that in her old age he might absolve his filial debt'.[33] The salient point here is that Chatterton, having a home and the means of present and future material subsistence, was not deserving of charity as Walpole understood it. By referring to himself as a guardian, Walpole cast himself as a figure willing to dispense advice but not untie his purse strings to a stranger. Chatterton, on the other hand, following Rowley's example, insisted that his literary vocation is worthy of support. He wrote again on 8 April making what to unsympathetic eyes reads as a naked appeal for money: 'Though I am but sixteen years of age, I have lived long enough to see that poverty attends literature'.[34] Walpole was unable to reply immediately having travelled to Paris, and after his request on 14 April to return the manuscripts went unanswered, Chatterton flew into a rage from which he never seems to have recovered. He wrote an intemperate letter on 24 July proclaiming himself

[32] By some irony, the Malpas family were benefactors of St Mary Redcliffe Pile Street School, where Chatterton's father was writing master. Chatterton's elder brother who died in infancy in 1751 was named Giles Malpas.

[33] Walpole, *A Letter to the Editor of the Miscellanies of Thomas Chatterton* (Strawberry Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1779), p. 35.

[34] Walpole, *Letter*, 36; *Correspondence*, 16; 113.

393 'injured' by Walpole and from mid-1769 onwards directed a torrent of satirical abuse
394 against 'Horatio Trefoil', 'Baron Otranto' and the like, apparently to ridicule Walpole as
395 a posturing antiquarian.[35]

396 It is important to take stock of Walpole's rapid descent in Chatterton's eyes from
397 hopeful benefactor to uncharitable miser. In Chatterton's medievalist Rowleyan universe,
398 the rich (the class to which Walpole assuredly belonged in Chatterton's view) held two
399 potentialities: generous patron (as William Canynges was) or embittered 'gouler',
400 Rowley's old-word for miser, or usurer. This significant character type occurs in the
401 verse 'entyrlude' entitled 'The Worlde' appended to the *Life of W: Canynge*, in which a
402 wealthy merchant instructs his son in the right use of riches. The '2d. Mynstrel' in the
403 personage of a 'faytour [beggar]' complains that 'to mee a goulers goulde / Doeth nete a
404 pyne avele' and in a subsequent passage the avaricious are punished by 'the Queed
405 [devil] of goulers'. [36] At the peak of his anger with Walpole in May 1769 Chatterton
406 framed a whole poem around the gouler persona, 'The Gouler's Requiem (quasi
407 Requiem) bie Canynge'. This short piece comprises the deathbed confession of a miser
408 for whom 'ne moe the sylver Noble sheenynge bryghte, / Shalle fylle mie hande wythe
409 weighte to speke ytte fyne' and who must now confront 'the Qwood [devil]'.'[37] The
410 association of these poems with Canynges underlines the nature of the choice the rich
411 faced in Chatterton's medievalist imagination as well as its blunter real-life counterpart:

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[35] This group of texts includes 'The Advice' (published in the *Town and Country Magazine* supplement of 1769), 'An Exhibition of Sign Paintings' (published in the *Middlesex Journal* on 26 May 1770), *Burletta. The Woman of Spirit*, (composed May-June 1770 and published posthumously in the 1784 *Supplement to the Miscellanies of Thomas Chatterton*). The 'Lines to Walpole' beginning 'Walpole! I never thought I should see so mean a heart as thine has proved to be' were probably composed by John Dix, in whose *Life of Thomas Chatterton* (1837) they first appeared. See Nick Groom, 'The Case Against Chatterton's "Lines to Walpole" and "Last Verses"', *Notes and Queries* 248.3 (September 2003), 278-80. Taylor classifies the lines among Chatterton's dubia; see *Complete Works*, 2.986.

[36] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.234.

[37] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.

either earn eternal glory through the liberal dispensation of wealth or literally and figuratively go to hell.

This heated atmosphere, I suggest, is the compositional moment of 'An Excelente Balade of Charitie: As wroten bie the gode Prieste Thomas Rowley, 1464', posted on 4 July 1770 in a letter to Alexander Hamilton, editor of the *Town and Country Magazine*, who rejected it. A late and artistically accomplished Rowley poem, its biographical significance and date are the subject of speculation and some uncertainty. A medievalist gloss on the parable of the Good Samaritan, 'An Excelente Balade' was traditionally interpreted as a rime royal cry of despair written shortly before Chatterton's supposed suicide at his lodgings at 39 Brooke Street on 24 August 1770.[38] Yet the current view that Chatterton died as a result of mixing recreational opium with medicine for venereal disease, casts doubt both on this view of the poem and on Chatterton's state of mind and evaluation of his prospects at the time – indeed Cook and Michael J. Suarez have argued separately that Chatterton's career in the summer of 1770 was waxing prosperous.[39] If we accept the full range of Donald Taylor's assessment, based on the internal evidence of the proportion of Rowleyan old-words in the text, that 'An Excelente Balade' may have been composed as early as May 1769, the poem can be placed in the very different setting of Chatterton's ire at Walpole and opened up to very different interpretative possibilities.[40] We need not share Taylor's view expressed elsewhere that the earlier composition date robs the poem of 'its pathos as a personal document' if we relocate it, as the ensuing

[38] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 2.1114.

[39] Michael F. Suarez SJ, "This Necessary Knowledge": Thomas Chatterton and the Ways of the London Book Trade', in Nick Groom (ed.), *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 96-113; and Daniel Cook, *Thomas Chatterton and Neglected Genius, 1760-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 88-92.

[40] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 2.1114.

reading will attempt to do, to another epochal moment in Chatterton's life: the clash with Walpole over the true meaning of charity.[41]

Internal textual evidence of the poem's preoccupation with Walpole's ill-treatment of its author abounds, both in the verse stanzas and the paratextual apparatus of notes and translations of Rowleyan old-words added by Chatterton. The use of rime royal with terminal alexandrines, a stanza associated with Chaucer and later with Milton, gives physical expression to the poem's keynote of defiance, for Gray and Mason had identified this very verse form as anachronistic in Chatterton's purportedly twelfth-century poem 'The Warre' (see below). The leading character, too, savors of Chatterton's self-perception at the height of his vexed dealings with Walpole. The ballad opens with a 'hapless pilgrim', a poor but deserving wayfarer on life's highway, making his way on foot to 'Seyncte Godwine's convent'.[42] The natural setting is one of plenitude and ripeness in sympathy with the maturation of genius: the 'apple rodded from the palie greene' and the 'mole peare did bende the leafy spraie', while a kindred melodist in the form of a 'peede chelandri' ('pied goldfinch'), 'sunge the livelong daie' (3-5). But the sudden onset of a storm ('a hepe of cloudes of sable sullen hue, / The which full fast unto the woodlande drewe, / Hiltring ['hiding, shrouding'] attenes ['at once'] the sunnis fetive ['beauteous'] face)' compels the pilgrim to shelter 'beneathe an holme' (4-11).

At this point the poem's antagonistic personal agenda begins to reveal itself. The sketch of the pilgrim as 'pore in his viewe, ungentle ['beggarly'] in his weede, / Longe bretful ['filled with'] of the miseries of neede' and an 'almer' ['beggar'], beset by

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[41] Taylor, *Chatterton's Art: Experiments in Imagined History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 156.

[42] Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.645, 2.16-7. Subsequent line numbers given in main text. For convenience, Chatterton's notes to old-words are shown in square brackets.

hailstones (15-21), piteously rehearses his view of himself as slighted by the world and in need. Then at the first mention of 'Seyncte Godwine's convent' (16), a tart note remarks that 'It would have been *charitable,* if the author had not pointed at personal characters in this Ballad of Charity.' Rowley, a Yorkist, is said to be animated by his dislike of the Abbot, Ralph de Bellomont, a Lancastrian, but Chatterton is also signaling that his target is a real person and that the poem's title should be understood as ironic.

Most brazen of all in the light of Gray and Mason's criticisms is the description of the pilgrim's face as 'glommed' (22). An unsent draft in Chatterton's Bristol mentor William Barrett's hand of what become the 14 April reply to Walpole defends the ancient provenance of the word 'glumm', arguing that John a Beverley, Gower and Lydgate all employed the term, therefore its use by 'Abbate John' in the twelfth century was not the solecism Walpole (channeling Gray and Mason) said it was.[43] Chatterton's note to this line more or less openly refers to the exchange of letters with Walpole and the figure referred to therein is unmistakably intended for him:

> A person of some note in the literary world is of the opinion, that *glum* and *glom* are modern cant words; and from this circumstance doubts the authenticity of Rowley's Manuscripts. Glum-mong in the Saxon signifies twilight, a dark or dubious light; and the modern word *gloomy* is derived from the Saxon *glum*'.

To Hamilton and the average *Town and Country* reader these jibes may have counted for little, but in the longer term Chatterton was playing a risky game of brinkmanship by scaffolding a poem he still presented as authentically medieval with references to an ongoing personal feud.

[43] For the unsent draft, see Chatterton, *Complete Works*, 1.273.

The ‘Excelente Balade’s turbulence and instability and refusal to occupy either a medieval or a modern habitus are seen further when a lexical turf-war breaks out between the Rowleyan old-words and Chatterton’s petulantly stark translations of them in the ensuing stanza. Doused in self-pity, the verse and the translations together teeter between a true ideal of charity that is spiritually rich, open-handed and actuated by Christian principles and a false ideal that is materialistic, spiritually barren and mean. Chatterton has already translated ‘ungentle’ and ‘almer’ as ‘beggarly’ and ‘beggar’ and goes on to render ‘church-glebe-house’, in the medieval context a place of shelter, as ‘The grave’ (24): ‘Haste to thie kiste [‘coffin’]’, the narrator urges the pilgrim, ‘thie onlie dortoure [‘a sleeping room’] bedde’ (25). The note of social protest punches like a gimlet through the poem’s medievalist fabric, nowhere more obviously than in the stanza’s final three lines. Their suspiciously un-medieval language receives emphasis in the terminal alexandrine: ‘Cale, as the claie whiche will gre on thie hedde, / Is Charitie and Love aminge highe elves; / Knightis and Barons live for pleasure and themselves’ (26-8).

Thus set up to fall and embodying the haughty callousness Chatterton/Rowley despises is the abbot, who rides onto the scene complaining about the inclement weather. An embellished version of Chaucer’s abbot in *The Canterbury Tales*, the abbot of Seyncte Godwine’s is an overdressed pompous fop: richly attired in a ‘cope [‘a cloke’] [...] all of Lyncolne clothe so fine, / With a gold button fasten’d neere his chynne’, ‘his autremete’ (the priestly robe symbolizing purity and simplicity) ‘was edged with golden twynne’, while his shone pyke [shoes] a loverds [lord’s] mighte have binne […] full well it shewn he thoughten coste no sinne’ (50-54). A splendid flourish of Chatterton’s own devising are the trammels of the abbot’s palfrey, which the ‘horse-millanare’ had ‘with

roses dighte' (55-6); a droll note reads 'I believe this trade is still in being, though but seldom employed'. This medieval macaroni is strongly reminiscent of caricature of Walpole as 'abbot of Strawberry', known for his love of display, dressing-up, effeminacy and homosexuality (Chatterton may have been young but he was scurrilous, as his satirical compositions more than demonstrate).[44]

Like Chatterton before Walpole, the 'droppynge pilgrim' throws himself upon the abbot's mercy, begging 'an almes, sir prieste!' […] (57). But as with Walpole's reply as Chatterton imagined it, he meets with an arrogant rebuff:

> Varlet, replyd the Abbatte, cease your dinne;
> This is no season almes and prayers to give;
> Mie porter never lets a faitour ['a beggar, or vagabond'] in;
> None touch mie rynge who not in honour live. (64-7)

We should recognize the acute class sensitivity of these lines, as Chatterton elides the 'poverty that attends literature' with the far more manifest destitution of the pilgrim, both of whom are spurned by a wealthy man who neglects his duty to God to act charitably to those in need. Following the contours of the parable, there enters a 'limitour', a mendicant friar familiar in medieval literature who may be a type for Rowley himself.[45] Unlike the abbot he is dressed austerely: 'ne dighte full proude, ne buttoned up in golde; / His cope and jape ['a short surplice, worn by Friars of an inferior class, and secular priests'] were graie, and eke were clene' (73-4). When the pilgrim begs a second time,

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[44] On Walpole's sexuality, see George Haggerty, 'Queering Horace Walpole', *Studies in English Literature* 46.3, 543-62; Matthew M. Reeve, Gothic Architecture, Sexuality, and License at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill', *Art Bulletin* 95.3 (September 2013), 411-39; Dominic Janes, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature, 1750-1900* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016); and Timothy Mowl, *Horace Walpole: the Great Outsider* (London: John Murray, 1996).

[45] The 'limitour' features in the work of Langland, Wyclif and Chaucer; see Arnold Williams, 'The "Limitour" of Chaucer's Time and His "Limitacioun", *Studies in Philology* 57.3 (July 1960), 463-78.

the limitour unhesitatingly ‘loosen’d his pouche threade, / And did thereoute a groate of silver take’ saying ‘here take this silver, it maie eathe [‘ease’] thie care; / We are Goddes stewards all, nete [‘nought’] of oure owne we bare’ (81-4). Here is another hint that redistributing money from rich to poor has its own reward and that one should do so without question. Having upbraided Walpole by the limitour’s example, the ballad ends with a couplet that requires some unpacking: ‘Virgynne and hallie Seyncte, who sitte yn gloure, [‘Glory’] / Or give the mittee [‘mighty, rich’] will, or give the gode man power’ (l85-91). This complex syntax is to say that if the mighty and rich do not ‘give’, that is give their money away (not necessary to the utterly destitute, one notices), the Virgin and holy saints will instead give their power to the ‘gode man’. This radical sentiment is in effect to say that charitable giving is a duty incumbent on the rich on pain of divine social intervention and confiscation of privilege.

This is a message entirely in accordance with the underlying attitudes of Chatterton’s letters to Walpole sent between March and July 1769. Confident of his talents as he was and convinced that they were being squandered in the drudgery of legal apprenticeship, he evidently viewed his claim upon Walpole’s bounty in the manner of a right, and moreover was vexed and baffled that a person such as Walpole, who could give easily, should subject a claimant to humiliating scrutiny. Chatterton’s problem was, of course, that he was offering what he claimed were manuscripts written by another hand while claiming the reward of original authorship; Walpole deduced quickly enough that Chatterton was the author, but declined to count literary patronage among his charitable obligations (as we have seen, that might have brought him an uncomfortable degree of recognition and acclamation). Only in Chatterton’s fiery mind could this particular circle

be squared. But it is also worth reflecting the social critique embedded in the 'Excelente Balade'. Like A.W.N. Pugin's later *Contrasts* (1841), the poem opens up a chasm between the spiritual values of charity witnessed in the Middle Ages (however much the abbot deviated from them) and the cruel indifference of the modern world which offers no target-language for the church-glebe-house or the limitour.

Walpole was forced reluctantly in 1779 to defend his character in response to attempts to blame him for Chatterton's death, specifically John Broughton's 1778 edition of Chatterton's prose and verse, which accused Walpole of 'neglect and contempt'.[46] Walpole's counterargument in the *Letter to the Editor of the Miscellanies of Thomas Chatterton* rests on the view that his was a reasonable reaction to an attempt by a headstrong, pardonably young man to hoodwink him. But above all, Walpole casts Chatterton as a person who was not in material need – he had a job, he just did not like it – and for whom reward in whatever form it came might have acted as further inducement to deceive. Scanning his own character, Walpole disavows any 'abilities in the character of a Mæcenas' and shrouds himself in his wonted privacy with the insistence that 'my fortune is private and moderate; my situation, more private; my interest, none […] It did not become me to give myself airs of protections' (17). He paints himself as a harmless collector of curiosities who is more interested in cultivating books than their authors. The gravamen of Walpole's exculpation is that it would have made no difference to Chatterton's fate had Walpole given him money. Walpole declares himself opposed to

[46] John Broughton (ed.), *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse; by Thomas Chatterton, the Supposed Author of the Poems published under the names of Rowley, Canning &c.* (London: Fielding & Walker, 1778), xxi. Before this, a review of Thomas Tyrwhitts's 1777 edition of *Poems, supposed to have been Written at Bristol by Thomas Rowley and Others in the Fifteenth Century* (1777) in the *Monthly Review* for April 1777 had criticized Walpole. This was followed by the direct accusation, in an account from George Catcott, that Chatterton 'met with little or no encouragement' from Walpole, 'soon after *which*, in a fit of despair, it is supposed, he put an end to his unhappy life', published in the continuation article in May 1777; *Monthly Review* 56 (April 1777), 256-65 and (May 1777), 321-28 (323).

random acts of charity and invokes the specter of Quixotism that would reappear in his reply to Hamilton four years later when he speculates on the difference helping Chatterton might have made:

> It is one of those possible events, which we should be miserable indeed if imputable to a conscience that had not the smallest light to direct it! If I went to Bengal, I might perhaps interpose and save the life of some poor Indian devoted [devoured?] by the fury of a British nabob; but amiable as such Quixotism would be, we are not to sacrifice every duty to the possibility of realizing one conscientious vision (41).

This is to say that such interventions may benefit an individual but there is not the least rational basis ('the smallest light') for choosing one person over another; the effort involved in helping one person may distract from more reasonably justifiable duties. Walpole would balance reason and romance again in the case of Louisa, but evidently considered a mentally ill homeless woman a worthier case than a frustrated legal apprentice.

Conclusion

Mary Berry echoed Walpole's appeal to privacy when in in 1840 she answered Thomas Babington Macaulay's withering character assassination of her old friend in his unsigned review of the 1833 edition of Walpole's *Letters*. 'Although no ostentatious contributor to public charities and schemes of improvement', Berry wrote, 'the friends in whose opinions he knew he could confide, had always more difficulty to repress than to excite

583 his liberality'.[47] Berry reiterates many of the themes traced over the course of this article:
584 Walpole's aversion to being thought 'ostentatious' and firm conviction that charity
585 belonged to the private sphere. One legacy of the great associational charities of mid-
586 century and the modes of display they encouraged may have been to increase public
587 accountability for individual magnanimity. Later on, the enabling of leisure time to
588 secure the means of literary production for those suitably talented was certainly
589 comprehended as charitable. Benevolence in this form united both Raisley Calvert and
590 Tom Wedgwood in their legacies to Wordsworth and Coleridge and the more class-
591 divided patronage offered by Hannah More, Capel Lofft and Samuel Jackson Pratt to the
592 laboring-class poets Anna Yearsley, Robert Bloomfield and Joseph Blacket, to name but
593 a few. This was objectionable for Walpole who resisted the imbrication of charity and
594 patronage. Not so Chatterton, who intentionally framed Rowley's patron Canynges as a
595 charitable benefactor.

596 There was satisfying if belated irony in the fact that Chatterton's sole surviving
597 relative, Mary Newton (no relation of the lady known to Walpole since her infancy),
598 benefited from sales of Robert Southey and Joseph Cottle's subscription edition *The*
599 *Works of Thomas Chatterton* when it was published in 1803.[48] Chatterton did fulfil
600 Walpole's guardianlike advice to provide a living for his family after all. Returning to the

[47] 'Advertisement to the Letters Addressed to the Miss Berrys', cited in Peter Sabor (ed.), *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1987), 331-9 (338). Macaulay's unsigned review of the *Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, to Sir Horace Mann* (1833) appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* (October 1833); Sabor 311-26.

[48] Robert Southey and Joseph Cottle (eds.), *The Works of Thomas Chatterton, Containing his Life, by G. Gregory, D.D., and Miscellaneous Poems*, 3 vols. (London: Biggs & Cottle for Longman & Rees, 1803). An earlier 1799 edition did not attract a sufficient number of subscribers. On the evolution of literary patronage, see Cook, *Thomas Chatterton and Neglected Genius* and Kerri Andrews, *Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, Patronage and Poetry: the Story of a Literary Relationship* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

concerns of introduction, we can trace these differing conceptions of charity into the imaginative sphere by revaluating them as patterns of belief and material practice that, I argue, are recoverably embedded in creative works such as *Otranto* and the 'Rowley' poems. The former is a work of secrets, the textual embodiment of the recessive quality captured by Macaulay's portrait of Walpole as a 'mask within a mask' and a work much concerned with what true charity should be (private). The latter openly perform their expectations of reward and punishment through the paragon Canynges and the cautionary example of the gouler respectively. I do not mean to suggest a direct coefficient between the personality of the author and the content of a text – to do so would be to revive critically outmoded ideas of simple intentionality – merely to point to ways in which structural correlations in patterning and impulses at work in the text may be endowed with new meaning by the study of charity, that most intimate material expression of how we wish the world to become a better place, for ourselves and others.